



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 109th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

House of Representatives

HON. GREG WALDEN
OF OREGON
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

IN SUPPORT OF BYRNE GRANT FUNDING
Monday, May 23, 2005

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with my colleagues from Nebraska and around the country on a most important matter – Byrne Grant funding. I appreciate the leadership of Mr. Terry and Chairman Souder on this issue as well as the work done by my fellow members of the House Meth Caucus to ensure that the needs of state and local communities are being met.

Byrne grants provide necessary federal resources that make possible enforcement and treatment programs undertaken by state and local governments to combat the illegal drug epidemic that is rampant throughout the nation, a plague that I've seen firsthand in communities throughout eastern, central and southern Oregon. Nowhere is the need for federal anti-drug resources more pronounced than in rural areas like Oregon's Second Congressional District, where entire communities struggle to cope with the proliferation of illegal substances and their devastating effects on families and communities.

According to an assessment conducted earlier this year by the Oregon HIDTA office, reducing funding for these programs would reduce interagency cooperation and intelligence sharing between local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. The assessment also found that operations by local taskforces on the front lines in the fight against illegal drugs would decrease by 25 to 75 percent. Without the federal funds received many local drug taskforces in Oregon would have to severely curtail operations, reduce staffing levels or even cease operations completely. Given the threat posed to children, families and communities by illegal drugs, these efforts to control the drug problem must continue.

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I want to again state my belief that Byrne Grant funding should be maintained at its current level as the House Appropriations Committee prepares to allocate funds to this and other critical anti-drug programs in the coming year.

The state of Oregon has historically received over \$6 million in Byrne grants, a significant portion of which has been allocated to programs and projects in the Second District. Local task forces like the Klamath Interagency Narcotics Team, the Mid-Columbia Interagency Narcotics Task Force, the Central Oregon Drug Enforcement team, the Jackson County Narcotics Enforcement Team, and the Blue Mountain Narcotics Enforcement Team, which receives about one-third of its budget from Byrne Grants, would be devastated without continued support from federal anti-drug programs.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year I conducted a series of seven town hall forums focused on production, distribution and abuse of illegal drugs, particularly the runaway problem of methamphetamine. While traveling throughout the Second District I heard again and again about the importance of federal resources to the outstanding efforts being conducted by state and local enforcement agencies and treatment and prevention providers. While I realize that we are in a time of strict budget constraint I strongly support these efforts and I will continue to do all I can to ensure that the federal government honors its commitment to fight the scourge of illegal drugs in our communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I yield back the balance of my time.